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Lambda Letters Project

32568

Vol. 3, No. 4 April, 1995 6212 Silverton Way, Carmichael, California 95608 Phone (916) 965-6851

A Letter from Boyce Hinman

Help from Members Is Needed!

Last month we used a headline very similar to the one above to make a plea for donations to help us reach the fund-raising goal of our annual spring fund drive. As you have every year, you responded with great generosity. In March members contributed almost $1,500. That, combined with your contributions in February, produced total donations of over $3,500. Several people obviously dug very deep into their pockets and purses to donate to the project. Please accept my heartfelt and very personal thank-you for this.

Now I must make another, very personal appeal, and I hope that there are others among you who will respond with the same sense of generosity. Lambda Letters has over 60 volunteers who do everything from stuffing letters to managing our bank account and editing this newsletter. Just as so many of you have been very generous with your dollars, many of you spend countless hours doing valuable volunteer tasks for the Project.

However, there are a number of major tasks for which we have never found volunteers. Inevitably

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Plan to Attend Our Fun-Filled Annual Auction!

This year's event promises to be more fun than ever before. It will be led by guest auctioneers Marghe Covino and Ken Topper, longtime Sacramento activists renowned for their wit and good humor. Come to this event prepared to laugh and support Lambda Letters while having the time of your life.

The auction will be held at the Town House, 1517 21st Street (between O and P Streets), in Sacramento. It will take place on **Sunday, April 30th, at 3 p.m.**

Sacramento businesses are donating many valuable items to be auctioned. However, we also ask that you scour your house for items that you know you no longer have any use for, but which you think others might want to have. Please be prepared to give an estimated value of your donation; it helps the auctioneers start the bidding. In past years our auctions have raised an average of $1,500 and we have set that as our goal for this year also. We know you'll have a fun time while supporting Lambda Letters. Please come to the auction, bring something to be auctioned, and help us reach our fund-raising goal for this event. See you there!

Lambda Letters Progress Report

Letters Collected

February, 1995	2,285 letters
This year	4,456 letters

Dollars Spent

February, 1995	$998
This year	$4,287

Can You Help?

Please support the very important work of the Lambda Letters Project with your contributions.

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Lambda Letters Project

Statement of Purpose

To promote people of color, feminist, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and HIV/AIDS status advocacy and to bring people of color, women, lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and persons affected by or living with HIV/AIDS into full participation in the mainstream of American society now, exercising all the privileges and responsibilities thereof.

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(*Actual cost to LLP for you to receive 44 letters in one year.)

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Faces of Sacramento

Why All the Advertising?

You're right. There *is* a lot of advertising in this issue of the Lambda Letters newsletter. We understand that some people might not be happy about that. However, we hope that you will be patient with us and support our advertisers.

Lambda Letters needs to grow. We need to greatly increase the number of letters we deliver each month to meet and beat the challenge that we currently face from the radical right and other homophobes. Doing this takes money and the more we grow, the more money it will take. You, our members, have been very generous. However, we know that we cannot always come to you for more money. Selling advertising space is one way of sharing the financial burden of the important work that Lambda Letters accomplishes.

We think it's wonderful that our advertisers are willing to support us in this way. So please be patient with us and thank our advertisers for supporting us by patronizing their businesses.

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Business-card sized ads (3½" × 2") $10 per issue
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Full-page ads $50 per issue

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Budget Cuts, Inaction, and Bad Bills

On the whole, at both the federal and state levels, the HIV/AIDS picture is not good. In Congress there have been attempts to cut funding for AIDS programs that was already appropriated. The most drastic example is the total elimination of the Housing Opportunities for People with AIDS (HOPWA) Program. Other cuts are still possible. Because of the timing of our letters, we have not been able to ask you to address the specifics of these cuts, although you *did* urge no further AIDS cuts in your January and February letters.

There is still hope that 1995 HOPWA funds will not be cut. The Ryan White CARE Act reauthorization, which did not get introduced in the last Congress because of some procedural problems unrelated to it, will be up before committees soon. We will likely have to fight to get this Act's important programs both continued and well-funded. (The CARE Act funds many AIDS activities at the state and local level.)

The state legislature has not been moving too rapidly on anything, but bills that have been introduced can carry over into next year's session. We'll keep you abreast of things there and you can be sure we'll be asking you to write them around budget-passing time.

This month's letter is addressed to California's delegates in the House of Representatives, concerning H.R. 1289 (Ackerman, D–NY). This egregious bill would remove the anonymity of HIV testing of newborn infants, now carried out by many hospitals in the country.

Our reasons for opposing the bill are contained in your letter, so we will not repeat them here. It is important to understand, however, that this testing does serve an important purpose, such as planning necessary levels of health care service for the affected populations (women and their infants).

To be blunt, we feel that removing the anonymity of these surveys will *only* be useful if the items in the next column are true:

- Follow-up care is made available to these mothers and their children.
- There is careful retesting, because up to 75 percent of HIV-positive newborns carry only traces of their mother's antibodies (they are not really HIV-positive).
- Prenatal testing is done with appropriate follow-up services, because this is the only thing that will prevent some cases of mother-infant transmission, as well as prolong mothers' lives.

And what are the chances of these conditions being met?

House Eliminates Essential Funding for People with AIDS

On March 16th the House of Representative voted on a so-called Recision Bill, H.R. 1158. This bill actually revokes *previously approved* spending in a number of areas, including funding for the National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities, which oversees the activities of the recently maligned National Endowment for the Arts, National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Institute of Museum Services. This bill also affects funding for the Centers for Disease Control, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and HOPWA, among many others.

These cuts are supposedly in the interest of reducing federal spending and tackling the national deficit. Unfortunately, their effect will be disastrous for millions of people across the country.

HOPWA stands for Housing Opportunities for People with AIDS. It provides funds to pay the rent of people who have AIDS and who have been driven into poverty by the steadily increasing costs of treating their diseases. If this Recision Bill is approved by the Senate as is, there will be *no further* HOPWA funding. Too bad for you if you have AIDS, is the message that many our legislators are sending us.

Interestingly enough, voting in the California delegation was almost entirely along party lines.

Continued on page 4

Table 1. House Vote on H.R. 1158

Name	Party	Vote
Bill Baker	R	Y
Xavier Becerra	D	N
Anthony Beilenson	D	N
Howard Berman	D	N
Brian Bilbray	R	Y
Sonny Bono	R	Y
George Brown	D	N
Ken Calvert	R	Y
Gary Condit	D	N
Christopher Cox	R	Y
Randy Cunningham	R	Y
Ronald Dellums	D	N
Julian Dixon	D	N
Calvin Dooley	D	Y
John Doolittle	R	Y
Robert Dornan	R	Y
David Dreier	R	Y
Anna Eshoo	D	N
Sam Farr	D	N
Vic Fazio	D	N
Bob Filner	D	N
Elton Gallegly	R	Y
Jane Harman	D	N
Wally Herger	R	Y
Steve Horn	R	Y
Duncan Hunter	R	Y
Jay Kim	R	Y
Tom Lantos	D	N
Jerry Lewis	R	Y
Zoe Lofgren	D	N
Mathew Martinez	D	N

Recision Bill

Continued from page 3

Every Republican member of the California delegation voted for H.R. 1158, while every Democrat voted against it, except Rep. Dooley, who voted for it. The names of the California delegation and how they voted are shown in Table 1.

Those of you who have Republican representatives should feel quite upset about this. Do they truly have your best interests at heart, or are they simply seeking monetary solutions to the deficit without taking the important human element into account?

Table 1. House Vote (cont.)

Name	Party	Vote
Robert Matsui	D	N
Howard McKeon	R	Y
George Miller	D	N
Norman Mineta	D	N
Carlos Moorhead	R	Y
Ron Packard	R	Y
Nancy Pelosi	D	N
Richard Pombo	R	Y
George P. Radanovich	R	Y
Frank Riggs	R	Y
Dana Rohrabacher	R	Y
Lucille Roybal-Allard	D	N
Edward Royce	R	Y
Andrea Seastrand	R	Y
Fortney Stark	D	N
Bill Thomas	R	Y
Esteban Torres	D	N
Walter Tucker	D	N
Maxine Waters	D	N
Henry Waxman	D	N
Lynn Woolsey	D	N

Support Dignity for All Students

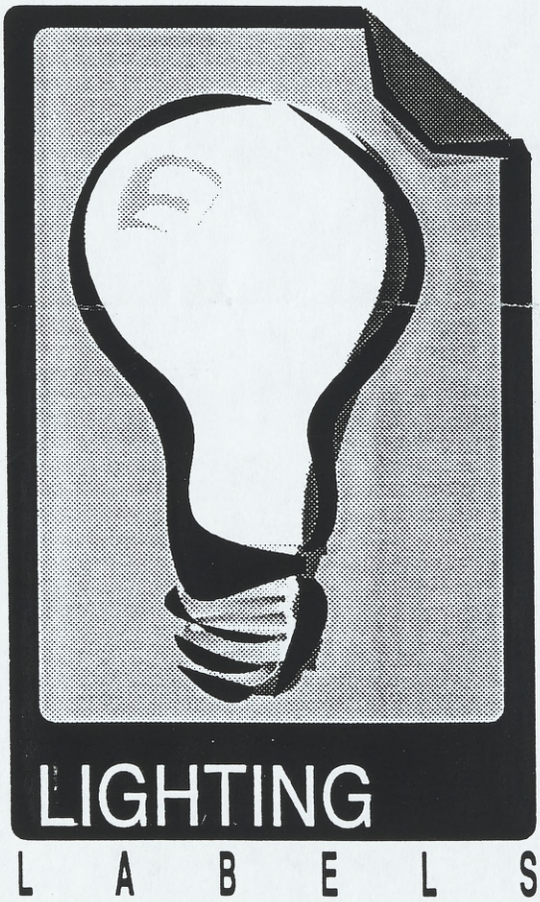
This month we are asking you to write to members of the Assembly Education Committee in support of A.B. 1001, introduced by Assemblywoman Sheila Kuehl (D-Encino). Assemblywoman Kuehl is the first openly homosexual person elected to the California State Legislature. She is also a former cast member of the "Dobie Gillis" television show.

A.B. 1001 would ensure that lesbian, gay, and bisexual students are protected from discrimination by adding "sexual orientation" to the list of protected categories in the State Education Code. The bill would apply to all public school districts, community college districts, and the State University system. It would also apply to the University of California, given the approval of the University Regents.

This legislation is important for a number of reasons. According to the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, 45 percent of gay male students and 20 percent of lesbian students experience verbal or physical assault in high school. A 1989 report of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services indicates that gay and lesbian youth are two to three times more likely to attempt suicide than heterosexual youth, and they make up 30 percent of all successful youth suicides annually. The same report states that 28 percent of gay and lesbian youth drop out of school because of intolerance in the school setting.

The California Supreme Court has ruled that education is a "fundamental right" under the California Constitution. This bill would not only protect all students' fundamental right to an education, but it would affirm the dignity and worth of all students.

Please write to the person shown on your sample letter and urge him or her to support A.B. 1001 when it comes before the Assembly Education Committee. That will happen no later than April 19th, so please return your letters promptly.



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The Marriage Option: Why We Should Care!

A case is now winding its way through the state courts of Hawaii that will probably end in the Hawaiian Supreme Court, declaring that same-sex marriages must be allowed in that state. Last year that state's Supreme Court ruled that a ban on same-sex marriages probably violated the Hawaiian Constitution. It sent the case back to the lower courts to decide some minor issues, but it appears that a final decision in favor of same-sex marriages may occur later this year.

Under present California law, our state would have to honor same-sex marriages obtained legally in Hawaii. California's courts have repeatedly ruled that any marriage that occurs legally in another state must be treated as valid in California, even if such a marriage would not be legal in this state. For example, there have been cases where young people went to another state to marry because they were too young to marry legally here, but not too young in the other state. Later, one of the parties sued, in California, to have the marriage annulled on the grounds that they were too young to marry under California law. The courts ruled that if they were of legal age to marry in the state in which the marriage occurred, then California must recognize the marriage and not annul it.

Why should we care about all this? Some people even think we should *oppose* same-sex marriages as mimicking an oppressive institution. However, there are a number of benefits and protections that marriage can provide. For example, some counties try to reassess the value of the home of unmarried couples when one of them dies, even when the home was held in joint tenancy. This can result in a major increase in property taxes for the surviving partner. (The Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund is fighting just such a case in San Diego now.) Typically, the county doesn't try to reassess when a married person dies, leaving their home to the surviving spouse.

Medical insurance is becoming very expensive and harder to get. Not only do many employers not provide it, but often people applying for individual coverage get turned down because of a preexisting condition. Some employers provide health insurance for their employees and their employees' spouses and children, but not for the domestic partners of employees. The ability of a lesbian, gay, or bisexual person to marry someone of the same sex might help get that partner on an employee health plan. That's a valuable privilege!

Some cities exercise rent control on residential property. In New York City the policy has allowed rent raises to occur on properties where someone died, leaving his or her domestic partner still living in the unit. Typically, rent increases are not allowed when the surviving person was married to the one who died. Some successful challenges to this discrimination are now occurring, but until the bad policy is firmly eradicated, surviving domestic partners, living in rent-controlled property, could be in for a nasty rent raise not usually faced by a widowed person.

If the Hawaiian Supreme Court does rule in our favor, you can expect attempts to block same-sex marriages in other states. Legal authorities tell us that could be done in California by passing legislation specifically stating that only marriages legal under California law may be recognized in this state. It will be important that we prepare for the onslaught in the coming months. You will definitely hear more on this issue from Lambda Letters.

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People of Color Issue

Protect the Right to Vote

This month we ask that you write about A.B. 10 (Hoge) to the member of the Assembly Elections Reapportionment and Constitutional Amendments Committee shown in your letter. The bill is scheduled for a hearing before the committee on April 17th. Please try to return your letters in time for that hearing.

Under current law, only U.S. citizens are permitted to vote in federal, state, or local elections. The *apparent* purpose of A.B. 10 is to prevent noncitizens from voting in our elections.

A.B. 10 would require that, at the time of registering to vote, every person must prove that he or she is a citizen by submitting two of the three following documents: a California driver's license, a Social Security card, or a birth certificate. The bill also states that, if a person is unable to submit these documents, the County Registrar of Voters should submit the voter's registration form to the office of the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State is then given three weeks in which to determine if the voter is a citizen and eligible to vote. A.B. 10 also requires that, on election day, the voter must sign a statement certifying that he or she is a citizen of the United States. The voter may not receive a ballot until this statement is signed.

The provisions of this bill might be necessary if there was evidence of large numbers of noncitizens voting in California elections. There is no such evidence. In fact, during Secretary of State Bill Jones' recent "Elections Summit," Beatriz Valdez, the Registrar of Voters of Los Angeles County, testified that the problem of noncitizens voting in elections is insignificant. Los Angeles is the largest election district in the nation. It also is the home of a large number of noncitizens. If any county were to have problems of noncitizens voting, Los Angeles would.

The difficulties created by H.R. 10 are not small. Most of us do not have access to our birth certificate. Naturalized citizens, born in another country, would not be able to use their birth certificate as evidence of citizenship. To get a driver's license, the Department of Motor Vehicles requires that you present a birth certificate, a military I.D., or a passport. Not many of us have either a military I.D. or a passport.

Most native-born persons now get Social Security cards as children. However, if that hasn't happened by the time you are ready to vote, you must provide a driver's license to get a Social Security card. Foreign-born persons must have a birth certificate or passport, as well as documents from the U.S. Immigration Service showing they are authorized to be in the U.S., before they can get a Social Security card.

Voter turnout in California elections is very low. According to the Secretary of State's office, only 55 percent of voting-age Californians voted in the 1992 presidential election, and only 47 percent voted in the 1994 election. Failure of people to vote threatens control of the government by its citizens. This threatens the existence of democracy in our nation. We need to make it easier for people to vote, not harder.

Mailing Lists Needed

In the past, Lambda Letters has depended heavily on the generosity of its members to support the costs of the Project. You all have responded generously and we are very grateful for that. However, we also know that we can go back to the same people only so many times. Therefore, we have begun to search for mailing lists of people likely to be supportive of our efforts so that we can send fund-raising letters to them.

Gary Miller, of Sacramento, loaned us his mailing list and the people on that list responded very generously to a fund-raising letter we sent them. Linda Birner, of *Mom . . . Guess What?* newspaper in Sacramento, has just loaned us her mailing list, and we hope that solicitations to the people on that list will be equally successful.

We need additional mailing lists. It would be particularly helpful to have lists of people who reside outside the Sacramento area, so we don't keep asking for donations from the same folks. Do you have access to a mailing list of people who are likely to be supportive of the Lambda Letters Project? If so, would you be willing to let us use it? If you have such a list, please send us a note enclosed with your letters, or call us at (916) 965-6851. We can then talk and work out the details. Thank you!

Help Needed!

Continued from page 1

these tasks have been left to me. As a result, the job I now handle is obviously too big for any one person to do well. My job is quite stressful and the growth of the Project is limited by the limits of my ability to manage the several major functions I now handle. Further growth in the Project may not be possible unless we find some way to divide the tasks I now perform among a few people. Failure to do so will prevent Lambda Letters from being as effective as it must be.

So with this newsletter I am making an urgent appeal—asking people to step forward to fill four important volunteer positions at Lambda Letters. A description of these positions follows. Please give serious consideration to volunteering for one of them.

Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual Legislative Analyst

This person composes the monthly article and sample letter on the l/g/b topic of the month. During the month he or she contacts sources that we provide to get advice on the most important issues to cover. This person also attends a monthly staff meeting in Sacramento, at which topics are chosen and other business is discussed. The meeting usually lasts two hours and most often occurs on a Sunday afternoon.

Fund-raising Chair

This person would manage the fund-raising activities of the Project. At present, these include the February appeal mentioned above, the annual spring auction, the sale of Entertainment Books in the fall, and the sale of calendars in the late fall. The Fund-raising Chair would supervise the volunteers who help us sell Entertainment Books and help put on the auction. At present, the busiest time is in the fall when we are selling Entertainment Books. We could certainly change our methods of raising funds if the Chair presented some good alternatives.

Alternate Database Manager

We manage our mailing list with a software product called Paradox 4.2 for DOS. Paradox is used to prepare our four monthly sample letters, prepare thank-you letters for contributions, send reminders to members who haven't sent in their letters, send letters to legislators, and perform other miscellaneous tasks. Recently we received the gift of another copy of Paradox which could be used by the Alternate Database Manager, either to take on one or more of these tasks or substitute for me occasionally when I am on vacation.

Mail Deliverer

To reduce our postage costs, we hand-deliver all mail addressed to state legislators. Letters are delivered twice a week sometime between the hours of 9–6. This could be done either by a retired person or by someone who works in downtown Sacramento on a lunch break or immediately after work. The volunteer Mail Deliverer would receive the mail in envelopes addressed to the legislators. The envelopes would be arranged in numerical order, by room number, to make delivery easier.

Lambda Letters and I need your help. Please consider accepting one of these positions.

Boyce Hinman
LLP Administrator

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Ensuring a Fairer Marketplace

This month's issue confronts the problem of gender-based discriminatory pricing in California. A.B. 1100, introduced by Assemblymember Jackie Speier (D–South San Francisco), is currently sitting in the Committee on Consumer Protection, Governmental Efficiency, and Economic Development. This month's letter is directed to the members of that committee.

Assemblymember Speier introduced a similar bill last year, A.B. 2418, the Equal Pricing Act, which passed in both the Assembly and the Senate. Although A.B. 2418 passed in both houses last year, it came before Governor Wilson, and he promptly vetoed the bill, stating that it "failed to provide that businesses do have a right to base prices upon legitimate factors." As you can imagine, A.B. 1100 will face more opposition from the more conservative Assembly this year.

This year's new and improved version is explicitly directed towards those goods and services which are "of similar or like kind." The new provision makes A.B. 1100 more clearly defined than its predecessor by recognizing the distinction between those instances where higher pricing occurs due to legitimate differences and where it occurs based solely on the customer's gender.

A.B. 1100 would give local district attorneys the authority to prosecute businesses that charge men and women different prices for the same services. It would also allow consumers to file price discrimination suits in small claims court. Although some remedial provisions already exist in our Civil Code for discriminatory pricing practices, they are weak and ill-defined. A.B. 1100 would guarantee more protection to female consumers by giving the code more definition and more "teeth."

The long-overdue need for this new bill is confirmed by a study conducted by the Assembly Office of Research. They showed that women are often charged more than men for the same goods and services, such as dry cleaning, laundry, sewing alterations, haircuts, clothes, automobiles, and automobile repairs. As Assemblymember Speier explains, "all this [bill] does is say if you provide the same service, . . . you charge the same price."

In our society today, it's bad enough that women earn less; they shouldn't also have to pay more. Women should not have to simply endure economic discrimination by telling themselves, "that's the price you pay for being a woman." A.B. 1100 strives to affirm the economic rights of women. Please sign this letter urging committee members to support this bill. We need to send a clear and strong message to the marketplace that it is totally unacceptable to require women to pay more, simply because they're women!

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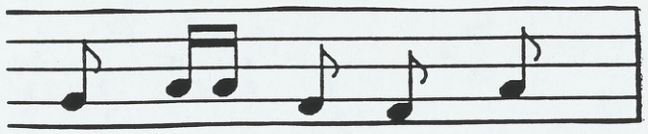

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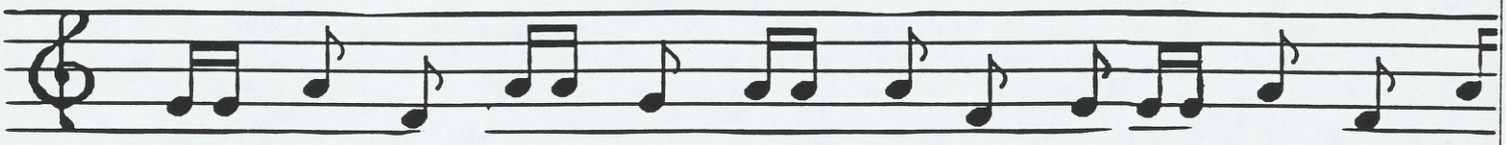
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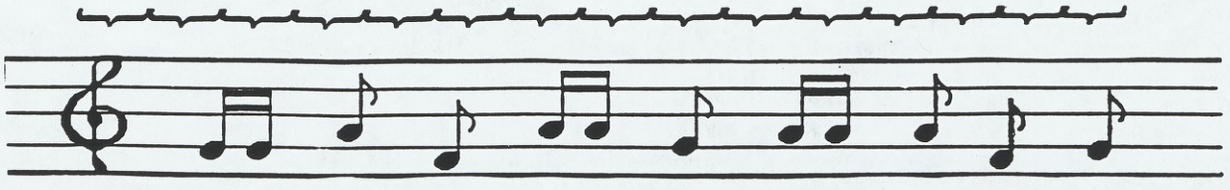
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